Don Ross, Low Handicap Man on Stage and Links

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THEATRE FOLK AREN'T SISSY

By BERT BINNY

AMONG THE MOST VALUABLE members of the Victoria Theatre Guild over the past eight years and, like Johnnie Walker, still going strong, is Don Ross.

Only quite recently he played the lead part of Mr. Vandergelder in Thornton Wilder's "The Matchmaker," the production which enjoyed such success that it ran an extra three nights beyond the usual seven.

But, previous to this occasion, Don had appeared in such other successes as "Goodbye, My Fancy," "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial," "Born Yesterday," "Laura," "Affairs of State," and "The Tender Trap."

And, in addition, he directed both the Guild production of "Jane" and the Light Opera Company's "The Jewel of Loodipoor."

Don Ross was born in Johannesburg in South Africa and received his education in the U.S.A. as far as the university level, when he attended St. Andrew's University in Scotland, hard by the famous Royal and Ancient golf links.

DON ROSS

At present his athletic interests are centred on golf and he has been president of the Royal Colwood in Victoria for the past three years. Perhaps the influence of St. Andrew's had something to do with both his interest and his proficiency. He has been a low handicap player for 37 years.

He was for some time a student at Deerfield School in the state of Massachusetts and it was here as Henry V in Shakespeare's "King Henry V," that he first entered the theatrical field. And this, according to Don, was no idle recreation. The Deerfield productions were serious projects. A Shakespearian actor of no little renown, Henry Irving, was his first director. This Henry Irving was not, however, the Sir Henry Irving, Lyceum producer and creator of the parts of the Polish Jew, Eugene Aram and just about every important character William Shakespeare ever thought up.

In Canada Don Ross was with theatrical organizations at Swift Current, St. Lambert and Saskatoon before coming to Victoria. It was the Saskatoon Little Theatre's production of "Rope" by Oscar Wilde that won the Regional Dominion Drama Competition and entered the finals at Ottawa. Don contributed to this success with his portrayal of the "ne-er-do-well" son.

The plays with which he was actively connected and which he remembers best were "The Ghost Train," a rare, sensational production in its day, and "The Bat." And, to avoid confusion here as between the Irvings, this "Bat" has no relationship with Strauss' "Die Fledermaus" or "The Bat" due for presentation here in May.

However, Don Ross's choice of "The Ghost Train" and "The Bat" as his best remembered plays does seem to indicate a weakness on his part for the sort of play seldom done in Victoria, the thriller.

Don Ross prescribes the capacity for relaxation and good voice production as the best means to acting success.

"There are so many lazy-lipped people," he says.

Then he lists three assets as of a director; a profound knowledge of stagecraft, patience and the best ally of patience, the saving grace, a sense of humor. Things can get plenty tough without that patience and humor.

"I have been directed by people who had me all ready to quit!" says Don, and this not necessarily because of constant attacks on him personally.

"There is a popular thought," says Mr. Ross, "that anyone — and particularly a man—who is interested in the theatre is sissified. This is not so!"

Well, oddly enough, I had this selfsame opinion, expressed in practially the selfsame words, by choreographer and ballerina, Celia Franca, not too long ago. So much depends on what is meant by "sissified." The critics seldom bother to explain. But the robust defences of theatre and dancing by Don Ross and Celia were anything but "sissified."

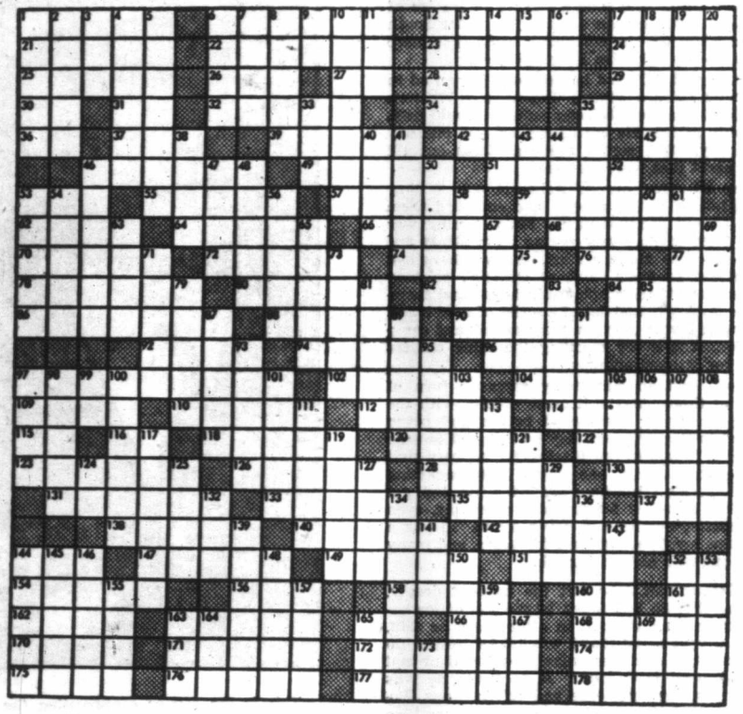
"'Arty' people seldom regard the economic side of play production."

This is another opinion expressed by Mr. Ross and with this one can agree completely, without condemning the said 'arty' people. One of the most successful theatrical organizations I ever knew was composed of 'arty' people on the one hand and hard-headed business folk on the other. And they co-existed excellently.

But then the greatest number of the people interested in the theatre combine art and economy in their personal make-up. They are the most valuable in the whole movement.

And a good example is Don Ross himself.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD PUZZLE

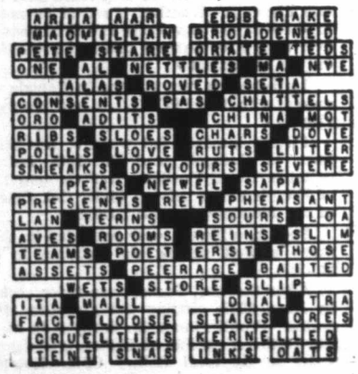


ACROSS

1 — and Allen
6 Make certain
12 Asterisks
17 Coarse file
21 Vegetable
22 Spruce
23 Belgian town
24 Wild buffalo of India
25 Lasso
26 Black bird
27 Hebrew letter
28 Money pooled for some special purpose by card players
29 Rivers (Sp.)
30 Pronoun
31 Symbol for iridium
32 Fracas
34 Frozen water
35 Equals
36 — Young, old-time pitcher
37 Ancient
39 Animal
42 Mistake
45 Confederate general
46 Whipsockets
49 Long-legged bird
51 Dolmen in Algiers
53 Cry of crow
55 Wilt
57 Projecting nose of swine
59 Musical conductor's stick (pl.)
62 Among
64 Having hearing organs
66 To take exception
68 Descendants of eldest son of Noah
70 Rants
72 Stephen Vincent —, author
74 Part of foot (pl.)
76 A direction
77 Paid notice
78 Genus of spider monkeys
80 Speed contests
82 Silver coin of Morocco (pl.)
84 Short letter
86 Cultivating
88 Goes at an easy gait
90 Armed private vessel which warred against enemy
92 Island west of Sumatra
94 Is borne by
96 Reach across
97 Principal of a school
102 Satan
104 Looked pryingly
109 Raise
110 Kind of car
112 Interprets
114 City in Iowa
115 North Syrian deity
116 Ireland (ab.)
118 Icelandic tales
120 Kind of type
122 Drone
123 Transfixed
126 Number
128 Appointed
130 Ill
131 Asiatic animal (pl.)
133 Station
135 Observes
137 Cents (ab.)
138 Prepares for print
140 Rich fabric
142 Comfort
144 Public vehicle
147 Excess of solar year
149 Part of coat
151 Persian elf
152 Exclamation of triumph
154 Bestow as due
156 Macaw
158 Edible seeds
160 Article
161 Symbol for sodium
162 Wise man
163 Danger
165 Man's nickname
166 Female ruff
168 River of Germany
170 Woody plant
171 Lift spirits of
172 Sparse
174 Soap plant
175 Dispose of for price
176 Scoffs
177 Serpent (pl.)
178 Region of French Equatorial Africa

DOWN

1 Kind of acid
2 State of being one
3 Narrow inlet
4 Idea
5 Involved in knots
6 First man
7 Rational
8 Cause accidentally to flow out
9 Aloft
10 Reiterates
11 Before
12 S. American monkey
13 A single effort
14 Changes
15 Decay
16 Vessel's curved planking
17 Unusual
18 Kind of gazelle
19 Breathe loudly asleep
20 Out of date
83 Elevated transportation lines
85 Talks idly
88 Challenge
40 Obey
41 Succulent plant (pl.)
43 Short for an insurgent
44 Tierra del Fuego Indians
46 Part that turns on a headed bolt
47 A region of N. India
48 More painful
50 A morbid swelling
52 Instant
53 Gem weight
54 Italian violin maker
56 Of punishment
58 Flower
60 Symbol for nickel
61 Condition
63 Glade
65 Ornamental placing of interior decorating accessories
67 Raises
69 River of Germany
71 French river
73 Lukewarm
75 Slides
79 Cuts in one stroke
81 Jewish home festival
83 A Georgian of the Caucasus
85 Faroe Islands' windstorm
87 Portals
89 To cut apart
91 Lizard
93 Ice cream parlor drink (pl.)
95 Ancient seaport of Phoenicia
97 Prepare for college
98 Illuminated again
99 Babylonian deity
100 Cower
101 Rasted
103 A paramour
105 Excess of chances
106 To regulate by law
107 Build
108 Casts a shadow over
111 Part of church (pl.)
113 Island off Asia Minor
117 Abounding in tall marsh grass
119 Division of the calyx
121 Colonist's greeting to Indian
124 Old musical syllable
125 Fall in drops
127 The back: zool. (pl.)
129 To take out
132 As it stands (mus.)
134 Drank liquor frequently by sips
136 State of N.W. Borneo
139 Beetle
141 Signifying maiden name
143 Motion picture theatre
144 Actors in play (pl.)
145 Cognizant of
146 Doughnut-shaped hard roll
148 Hackneyed
150 Big
152 To anoint
153 Seraglio
155 Spool
157 Beverage (pl.)
159 Fortune teller
163 Wooden pin of stringed instrument
164 Man's name
165 Candlenut tree
167 Bitter vetch
169 Male offspring
173 Paid notice

SOLUTION NEXT SUNDAY

Last Sunday's Solution